FBI Harassed Socialists for a Decade, Court Finds

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AROUND THE NATION

NEW YORK—Using 1,300 paid informants, the FBI infiltrated and harassed the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance over a 10-year period, according to a court report.

The report was compiled by a "special master" appointed by U.S. District Court Judge Thomas P. Griesa to recommend what sanctions should be applied against the government in response to a $40 million damage suit filed by the two small socialist groups.

The report said that from 1961 to 1971 the FBI's "disruption program" included electronic surveillance, "surreptitious entries," and leaks to the press of criminal records of Socialist Workers Party candidates. The agents also sent anonymous letters to the SWP members, supporters and employers, the report said.

The two socialist groups originally filed suit in 1973. Attorney General Griffin B. Bell refused to comply with a 1977 order by Griesa that the government disclose the files of 18 FBI informants to determine the nature of the harassment. Bell was cited for contempt, but a court of appeals vacated Griesa's action and instructed the judge to determine "lass stringent" sanctions in order to proceed with the civil damage suit.